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~ Firefox 'Privacy Mode' ~ People Are Talking! ~ Dropbox Is Live!
~ Yahoo Gets A Makeover ~ No Wi-Fi, No Magic! ~ Obama Sex Video?
~ AOL One-Stop E-mail! ~ Google Changes Policy! ~ Game Sales Booming

~ Berners-Lee Spots Flaw ~ Bosses Screen Web Life ~ Wii To Get Wi-Fi!

-* Fake You Tube Pages, Malware *-
-* McAfee's Nearly Instant Malware Aid *-
-* Virginia Court Strikes Down Anti-Spam Law! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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What a week! The temps cooled down in the Northeast, while hurricanes threatened the gulf coast. I'll take the cool down! This kind of weather made hard work on the golf course a lot more bearable to handle. And we put in a long and hard week!

Well, the "single life" will end in a couple of days. I talked to my wife earlier today, and the ship is on its way back to New York. From there it'll be a 5-hours bus ride back to Boston. So, I'll either pick her up late Saturday night, or some time on Sunday. It was a strange week being a "bachelor", I can tell you that! A few steaks, a few beers, sleeping a little late, and no "honey-do" list for a week!

So, while I enjoy a few more hours of "freedom", let's take a stroll through this week's issue.

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. We're not doing UseNet messages this week, since there just aren't enough to make a good column.

I'd make you sit here and read through a bunch of my rambling about politics and other assorted stuff, but the truth is that I've kind of under the gun here...

The father of one of my long-time friends passed away and they're making plans as I type this for interring his ashes in their family plot here in town.

Y'see, the parents retired and moved from Connecticut to Florida, and the rest of the family is spread out all over the east coast from New Hampshire to Florida.

Being a long-time friend, and seeing as I’m less than five miles from where my friend’s father’s ashes will be buried, I’ve offered to help with any arrangements where I can.

Oops... big mistake. I don’t mean to sound like I’m complaining, but you tend to forget all the minutia that’s involved in just getting somebody planted in the ground.

I’m happy to help out, though, and I’m sure that it’ll be appreciated. And, if it’s, not, y’know what? That’s not important. I didn’t offer my help so that they could coo over how good a friend I am. I offered my help to make things as easy as I could for a family that I’ve been proud to count among my friends for more than 30 years.

Well, off to call someone about getting a canopy for the graveside service and see about hotel rooms for far-flung family members.

C’mon back next week and let’s hope that there are enough UseNet messages to make a good column.

’Till then, keep your ears open so that you’ll hear what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Wii Gets Wi-Fi Adapter!
Spore Gets the Treatment!
Game Sales Booming!
And more!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Nintendo Announces Wii Wi-Fi Adapter

Befuddled housewives anxious to download Strong Bad’s Cool Game for Attractive People need no longer worry. Nintendo has announced the Nintendo WiFi Network Adapter, due to arrive in Japan September 18.

Kotaku is reporting that the WiFi Network Adapter can serve as a router, or become a "bridge" for an existing router. It can also be set to "Auto," which will automatically switch over the household’s network. Wii owners, consider your online experience streamlined.

The adapter will be available for ¥5,800 (USD $53) on Nintendo's homepage, and can be used with both the Wii and the Nintendo DS. No word on whether it's due to come out to America, but we'll count it as "likely." For Wii owners who haven't yet figured out how to access the splendors of Everybody Votes, will this be enough to push you online?

'Spore' Gets the Social Network Treatment

With all due respect to Hell's Kitchen, the biggest game release of the last week was unquestionably Spore. That's why Raptr - the hot new social platform for gamers - got the game up and running on their service as quickly as possible. Joining Raptr-compatible heavy-hitters like Steam, Xbox Live, PlayStation Network, and World of Warcraft, Spore players can now ping their buddies with the intimate details of their galactic conquest.

For those in the dark on this whole Raptr scene, it's essentially trying to do for gamers what Facebook did for alcohol-dependent college students. It's a social network that collects tons of data from the games you play, and then presents your accomplishments in aggregate to the world - via the Raptr client itself, or by forwarding to other networks like Myspace. In the case of Spore, Raptr will automatically inform your friends of your in-game achievements, in addition to providing real-time snapshots of your creations as they develop and evolve.

Achieving seamless integration with such a big-name title is commendable, lending the upstart some early credibility. That goodwill should come in handy, especially in the face of the established competition. We'll be taking a closer look at Raptr in the coming weeks, so be sure to check back when you're not too busy looking at the new feet your cousin just put on his Spore creature.

Preorder 'Far Cry 2' at Gamestop for Extra Missions

Want more variety in your AAA-game special editions? Of course you do. In a press release today, Ubisoft announced a new Limited Preorder Edition of Far Cry 2 exclusive to GameStop stores. This isn't the Limited Edition we reported on Friday; instead it's regularly priced and only available for pre-ordering at GameStop. The Preorder Edition comes packed with six bonus missions promising about three extra hours of gameplay, a fold-out map, and exclusive packaging. We have no word on whether this new packaging is the same wooden box promised with the other LE set.

In the same press release, the company reconfirmed the game's previously reported October 21 release date, so you'll know when to order by. So which is more important to you: a t-shirt, art book, and DVD, or three hours of bonus missions? Or if you preorder the Limited Edition, do you get both the Limited Edition and Preorder Edition contents? What's the end result of all of this special edition mixing and matching? Our heads just exploded.

Video-Game Sales Still Booming Despite Slowdown

Stockings are expected to overflow with video games this year, researchers say. As the 2008 holiday season approaches, the gaming industry is gearing to get under the tree and analysts are predicting August's single-digit sales growth is no indication of what to expect for the holiday season.

Analysts predicted the gaming industry would begin to slow down during the summer months and they did, according to NPD Group, a research firm based in New York. But that will not hurt the bottom line.

The gaming industry's massive double-digits growth over the year had to slow eventually. August saw an increase of only 9 percent in video-game sales from August 2007, but analysts say single-digit growth in August is okay.

"It's not a big deal," said David Riley, a spokesperson for NPD Group. "The summer months are historically the slowest months in the industry in terms of sales. The industry historically has followed the seasonality trends."

In the summer months consumers are busy doing other things like vacationing and playing outdoors and are not normally in front of the television, according to Riley.

Retailers in the U.S. cashed in on $1.08 billion in video-game sales for August, compared to $995 million the same month in 2007.

"Why have we seen continued growth in this industry even though we are in a recession?" Riley asked. "{Software games} are going to be under the tree because they won't fit in the stockings," he quipped. "I don't think the industry is going to be suffering."

In fact, NPD analysts say the industry will do well because during the holidays and in the last three calendar months, the industry generally makes 50 percent of annual sales.

Despite a slow month, companies are expected to hit their annual revenue target of $22 billion to $24 billion because year-over-year numbers are still showing double-digit increases.

Microsoft's Xbox 360, Sony's PS3, and Nintendo's Wii have been fierce competitors on retailers' shelves, and, depending on which day it is, Xbox or Wii will lead.

And it's no secret that the two gaming systems will continue competing for holiday shoppers' attention. Wii and Xbox were in the top three in sales for the month of August.

While Xbox 360 sold an impressive 195,200 units in August, Wii sold more than double with 453,000 units.

"It's a very competitive market," said Riley. "It's very small and incestuous with just a small number of players, but it's huge in terms of revenue."

The recent price drop for the Xbox 360 to $199 may help Microsoft sell

more units, especially to those consumers who were on the fence about buying the game console. "You can expect to see some interesting results in September," Riley said.

Asked if Nintendo and Sony will follow Xbox's lead in the price cut, Riley said: "Not any time soon. I don't know what they are thinking, but they don't need to drop the prices."

Consumers want their gaming devices in hand along with other devices, and it showed as Nintendo DS trumped Wii and Xbox, selling 518,300 devices.

"Nintendo has ruled the portable space for so long," Riley said. "The Nintendo DS is highly addictive and certainly does attract the masses because it has a huge library of titles that appeal to every type of demographic you can imagine."

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Virginia Court Strikes Down Anti-Spam Law

The Virginia Supreme Court declared the state's anti-spam law unconstitutional Friday and reversed the conviction of a man once considered one of the world's most prolific spammers.

The court unanimously agreed with Jeremy Jaynes' argument that the law violates the free-speech protections of the First Amendment because it does not just restrict commercial e-mails. Most other states also have anti-spam laws, and there is a federal CAN-SPAM Act as well.

The Virginia law "is unconstitutionally overbroad on its face because it prohibits the anonymous transmission of all unsolicited bulk e-mails, including those containing political, religious or other speech protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution," Justice G. Steven Agee wrote.

In 2004, Jaynes became the first person in the country to be convicted of a felony for sending unsolicited bulk e-mail. Authorities claimed Jaynes sent up to 10 million e-mails a day from his home in Raleigh, N.C. He was sentenced to nine years in prison.

Jaynes was charged in Virginia because the e-mails went through an AOL server there.

The state Supreme Court last February affirmed Jaynes' conviction on several grounds but later agreed, without explanation, to reconsider the First Amendment issue. Jaynes was allowed to argue that the law unconstitutionally infringed on political and religious speech even though all his spam was commercial.

Jaynes' attorney, Thomas Wolf, has said sending commercial spam would still be illegal under the federal CAN-SPAM Act even if Virginia's law is invalidated. However, he said the federal law would not apply to Jaynes because it was adopted after he sent the e-mails that were the basis for the state charges.

McAfee Brings Nearly Instant Malware Updates

What if your desktop security application could detect and remove a new threat that was only minutes old? That's the impetus behind McAfee Artemis Technology, announced on Monday.

Artemis, which McAfee plans to market within its 2009 consumer products as "Active Protection," is not focused on hourly updates, or even 15-minute updates, as rival Symantec has. It means instant detection, said Dave Marcus, director of security research and communications for McAfee Avert Labs.

McAfee's use of Artemis is similar to Trend Micro's use of cloud-based computing to analyze and produce new signature files within 15 minutes in that software on the desktop, then pass suspicious files to a larger, remote database. McAfee's Marcus told CNET News that the difference is that McAfee plans to use a desktop communication channel already built into the product, so existing users won't need to download new software.

The file database maintained at McAfee Avert is much larger than what's possible on the desktop. Marcus said it's responsive to minute-by-minute changes in the threat landscape. The new technology opens a doorway to the larger database.

When asked if Artemis is a listening agent, one that reports desktop activity back to McAfee, Marcus dismissed the idea. He said that whenever the McAfee software finds something suspicious and not in its signature database, it'll ping the larger database back at McAfee Avert Labs to get the signature needed. The files sent back and forth are minuscule, he added.

Marcus confirmed that McAfee would continue to send down daily signature files, but, in the heat of the moment, if a new malware sample is received by a McAfee-protected computer, it'll have instant protection from the vast database back at the company headquarters.

New Tool Creates Fake YouTube Pages for Spreading Malware

Cybercriminals are getting more and more business-like. The latest examples involve a tool that automates the creation of fake YouTube Web sites that can be used to deliver malware and password-cracking services for sale.

Panda Security said it has uncovered a tool circulating in underground hacking forums, dubbed YTFakeCreator, that enables anyone to easily create a fake YouTube page that surreptitiously installs a Trojan, virus, or adware on a visitor's computer, said Ryan Sherstobitoff, chief

corporate evangelist of Panda Security.

The tool does not spread the video link on its own. An attacker must distribute it via e-mail, FTP, IRC channels, peer-to-peer file-sharing networks or CD.

Once a visitor arrives at the page, a fake error message appears saying that the video can’t be played because an important software component, such as a codec or Flash update, is missing. The visitor is prompted to download the software and the malware is installed.

YTFakeCreator makes it easy for even unskilled people to set up an attack. It has a configuration menu that lets the would-be attacker select a warning message to be displayed on the fake video page and properties of the video, among other options. More details are on the Panda site.

"They’ve really commercialized malware. There’s been an upsurge of sophisticated custom-built Trojans that come with service level agreements and tech support sold in underground forums," Sherstobitoff said. "They are renting out denial of service attacks and botnets and selling trading, just like arms dealers, but in this case it’s electronic crime."

Meanwhile, IBM’s Internet Security Systems said password cracking is also being commercialized and marketed as "password recovery" services.

Browser Wars Heat Up as Firefox Adds ’Privacy Mode’

Keeping in step with rival Web browsers from Microsoft and Google, Mozilla has announced a "privacy mode" for Firefox 3.1. The update is scheduled to be released in beta form in October.

In privacy mode, a browser doesn’t record a history of visited sites or save cookies from those sites.

On the Mozilla Wiki, developer Mike Connor listed three goals for the privacy mode.

"There should be a clear line drawn between your ’public’ and ’private’ browsing sessions," he wrote, so users can’t be tracked when they are doing things they consider private. Information on visits can still be explicitly saved, he continued, such as per-site permissions, bookmarks, and so on.

In addition to not recording visited sites and removing all downloads from a given session, privacy mode will also mean there is no prompt to save passwords, and password fields cannot be autofilled. "Autocomplete" can be available, but entered data will not be kept. When a user enters or leaves privacy mode, any current authenticated sessions will be logged out.

Currently, Firefox offers an extension called Stealthier with private browsing features.

The addition of privacy mode is a response, at least in part, to the recent launch of a beta version of Google’s Chrome browser, which

features a privacy mode called Incognito. In the Web-published log of Mozilla bug tracking, one Firefox developer noted that "recent developments with Chrome will likely make finally getting private-browsing mode shipped a priority for 3.1."

When a user opens Incognito in Chrome, however, Google points out that its privacy mode is not intended to deal with such privacy issues as identity theft or tricking users. This includes, Google noted drily, "Web sites that collect or share information about you," malicious software that tracks your keystrokes, "surveillance by secret agents" or "people standing behind you."

In addition, the number-one browser in market share, Internet Explorer, features private browsing - called InPrivate - in IE8 Beta 2. The Safari browser from Apple also has private browsing.

Some observers are suggesting that this latest round of one-upmanship suggests that the browser wars are back. Harold James, writing in Business Day online, wrote Friday that "Google is threatening to reopen the browser wars of the 1990s, when Microsoft’s Internet Explorer eliminated its rival, Netscape’s Navigator."

Al Hilwa, program director at industry research firm IDC, said, "We’re definitely back in the browser wars."

But, he pointed out, "a lot has changed" since the first major war 10 years ago. This generation of browser competition, he said, is taking place in an environment where a browser is a common interface for many applications, a role once served exclusively by operating systems.

Hilwa also noted that there is also "more isolation between processes, more security and privacy," and browsers now have a prominent role in the center ring of computing - mobile devices.

AOL Rolls Out One-Stop E-mail Service

AOL on Wednesday unveiled a new e-mail feature designed to allow users to access multiple e-mail services from one location on the site.

The e-mail service is part of AOL’s plans to debut new features to the site over the coming weeks; the features aim to provide customization and give users more control, such as adding Web links to the main navigation bar and accessing custom feeds from a variety of sites from AOL.com’s main page.

The new features follow efforts earlier this year to shore up the company’s user traffic by revamping the design of its Web sites, from Money & Finance to its News and Sports pages.

Dropbox Is Live and Linux-Friendly

Dropbox, one of the many file-synchronization and online-backup combo tools to debut this year is finally ready for the masses to sign up; no more invite required. The basic service is free and includes 2GB of

storage space online.

With the launch comes pricing for more storage - the next jump from 2GB at no charge is 50GB for either $9.99 a month or $99.99 a year. The Dropboxers say the 2GB accounts will remain free forever, and if you had more space during the beta you're probably grandfathered in.

Maybe even better news: Dropbox now has Linux clients (for Fedora Core 9 and Ubuntu 7.10 and 8.04), which it says is functionally the same as what you get on Mac and Windows. You won't find that yet with the competition. Now, if only Dropbox opened up sync/backup to more than just a single folder. But the developers in the Dropbox forums say it's coming.

Google Slashes Data-Retention Policy in Half

In the face of heavy pressure from privacy advocates, Google on Monday announced a new policy on retention of data.

The latest privacy plan centers on a promise to anonymize IP addresses on Google's server logs after nine months. That slashes the data-retention policy in half to - as Google explained it - address regulatory concerns and take another step to improve privacy for its users. But Google is not saying how it is making the addresses anonymous.

"Over the last two years, policy-makers and regulators - especially in Europe and the U.S. - have continued to ask us (and others in the industry) to explain and justify this shortened logs-retention policy," said a Google blog post attributed to Global Privacy Counsel Peter Fleischer, Senior Privacy Counsel Jane Horvath, and software engineer Alma Whitten.

"We responded by open letter to explain how we were trying to strike the right balance between sometimes conflicting factors like privacy, security, and innovation," they continued. "Some in the community of EU data-protection regulators continued to be skeptical of the legitimacy of logs retention and demanded detailed justifications for this retention. Many of these privacy leaders also highlighted the risks of litigants using court-ordered discovery to gain access to logs, as in the recent Viacom suit."

Google's initial move in March 2007 to anonymize its logs, the company noted, came with the potential to sacrifice future innovations and degrade the usefulness of the data in a way that outweighed the privacy benefit for users.

Nevertheless, Google said it continued working on what it calls a computer-science problem. The problem is difficult to solve, Google said, because the characteristics of the data that make it useful to prevent fraud are the very characteristics that also introduce some privacy risk.

"After months of work, our engineers developed methods for preserving more of the data's utility while also anonymizing IP addresses sooner," the privacy team wrote on the corporate blog. "We haven't sorted out all of the implementation details, and we may not be able to use precisely the same methods for anonymizing as we do after 18 months, but we are

committed to making it work."

Still, Google made it clear that it is still concerned about the potential loss of security, quality and innovation that may result from having less data. Google warned that as the anonymization period grows shorter, there is a shrinking gap between the benefit to users and the drawbacks to innovation.

Privacy advocate seem appeased, at least for now. Ari Schwartz, deputy director at the Center for Democracy and Technology, called Google's move toward a nine-month retention policy a positive step, especially when considering that just more than a year ago there was no limit on data storage.

"How long do the engineers need the information to prevent fraud and maintain search quality? There's been a debate on that and the numbers keep changing. We still don't know the answer and we still don't know how the anonymization is going to work," Schwartz said, noting that Google now has the shortest data-retention policy in the industry.

"There are still lot of questions out there, but we are moving in the right direction. If Google answers the question about how they are going about doing IP anonymization, that will help answer some of these questions about how long you need it for."

The EU's research concluded that search engines don't need to retain data for longer than six months. Schwartz said competing search engines could move to outdo Google with six-month data-retention policies, but when and who is not clear.

Yahoo's Home Page, Other Sections To Get Makeover

Yahoo Inc. is preparing to tweak several popular sections of its Web site, including its home page, during the next few months to accommodate more material from rival services as the Internet company tries to polish its tarnished franchise.

The makeover outlined for reporters Thursday represents another a key step in Yahoo's push to regain the momentum that it lost while being outmaneuvered by Internet search rival Google Inc. and more recent upstarts like the rapidly growing online hangouts MySpace and Facebook.

Yahoo's previous dawdling crimped its profits during the past two years, leading to a dramatic downturn in its market value that triggered an unsolicited takeover bid from Microsoft Corp. this year.

Since Microsoft withdrew its $47.5 billion bid in May, Yahoo has been battling to boost its stock price, which recently sunk to its lowest level in nearly five years. Yahoo shares climbed 85 cents Thursday to close at $18.55, well below Microsoft's last offer of $33.

Boasting 500 million users worldwide, Yahoo is hoping to bounce back by becoming an even more indispensable vehicle for Web surfers and advertisers. As part of that process, the Sunnyvale-based company has been spotlighting more content from other Web sites and extending its advertising network so it can run ads on more Internet properties.

Yahoo plans to open up more with the first major redesign of its home page since May 2006. The changes will enable Yahoo users to plant more mini-applications known as "widgets" on personalized versions of the home page, said Ash Patel, executive vice president of the company’s audience product division.

In a demonstration, Patel showed how Yahoo users subscribing to the online DVD rental service Netflix will soon be able to review their latest movie requests and ratings without leaving Yahoo’s main page. Yahoo is hosting a conference for outside developers Friday in hopes of cultivating more applications for its new home page.

Patel declined to specify when the redesigned page will be unveiled, saying only that it will begin gradually within the next few months. "You will see a rolling thunder kind of thing," Patel said.

Yahoo also plans to open up its music section to rival services like Apple Inc.’s iTunes and Amazon.com Inc. during the next few weeks, said Scott Moore, who runs Yahoo’s media operations. Moore said Yahoo’s news section also will start to feature more local content from newspapers around the nation.

Another one-time Internet darling, Time Warner Inc.’s AOL, announced a similar redesign this week, opening its home page to content from rival companies in a bid to broaden its appeal to users who have endless choices online.

On the marketing front, Yahoo still plans to begin an advertising partnership with Google next month despite an intensifying antitrust investigation by the U.S. Justice Department.

Yahoo thinks it can boost its annual revenue by $800 million by relying on Google’s technology to sell some of the ads on its Web site, but the partnership has raised concerns about diminished competition because the two companies combined control more than 80 percent of the U.S. search advertising market.

In a move that could foreshadow a formal legal challenge, the Justice Department has hired an antitrust lawyer to review the evidence collected in an inquiry that began even before Yahoo announced its partnership plans with Google in June.

Because they aren’t exchanging stock or cash, Yahoo and Google could have launched their alliance months ago but voluntarily waited until October to allow antitrust regulators to assess the situation.

Yahoo plans to start posting some ads from Google at an unspecified date next month, even if the Justice Department hasn’t completed its review, said Hilary Schneider, who oversees Yahoo’s U.S. operations. Google Chief Executive Eric Schmidt has expressed the same intention.

"We are confident we can get (regulators) comfortable" with the partnership, Schneider said Thursday.

Without Wi-Fi, Mini-Computers Not As Magical

As personal computers go, the new rash of ultra-mini laptops are full of

geeky goodness. Light, portable and powerful, they are almost perfect. Almost.

But like a rowboat in your backyard or a flat-screen TV in a blackout, most of these new PCs suffer when removed from a critical element. Specifically - when outside of high-speed Internet access range, they go from power-in-your-pocket to pricey-digital scratchpads.

The idea behind the resurgent "netbook" niche is that consumers-on-the-go primarily use computers to email, write documents, manage spreadsheets and surf the Web. Once online, they can access critical files, chat with others, or use social sites like Facebook or music services like Pandora.

That’s great - if you are sure to be near a broadband connection, such as a home network, a Wi-Fi-covered college campus or an area with WiMax, a high-speed wireless technology that can blanket entire cities.

But an unconnected machine’s power is limited.

"I am convinced this class of products will sing when WiMax comes out," said Rob Enderle, principal analyst at The Enderle Group. "It kind of depends on ... being always connected. As a disconnected device, outside of email and word processing, it’s not quite as interesting.

"It’s more focused on the future than on the present."

By eschewing video editing, the ability to play DVDs, or power gaming, these users forgo the need for cutting-edge chip speed or tons of hard-drive storage capacity, and the extra cost they require.

The latest in this genre is Dell’s Inspiron Mini 9, a 2-pound machine with a 9-inch screen and wireless Internet card. At $349, it is similar to rivals developed by Hewlett-Packard, Acer, ASUS, Intel and others aiming at youngsters who prefer a full screen and keyboard to thumbing on smartphones.

With U.S. consumers watching their wallets amid economic uncertainty, the low prices may pique their interest.

"We think that price is ... affordable," said John Thode, a vice president at Dell. "We find that that is the right kind of price to encourage (the purchase of) second and third devices in a person’s portfolio."

Think of these PCs as an economical fit between pocket-sized smartphones - which surf the web, and manage contacts and information on a business-card sized screen - and full blown laptop computers. Dell’s base model Inspiron 9 comes with 512 megabytes of RAM memory, a 4-gigabytes solid state drive, and built-in wireless network card.

Last year, Taiwan’s Asustek Computer introduced the $399 Eee PC which flew off store shelves from Asia to North America.

Dell’s netbook, which is powered by Linux operating system software (or Windows XP, plus a built-in webcam, for $50 more), is as light as Apple’s MacBook Air, but smaller by about 4 inches in screen size. Apple’s Air also boasts an 80-gigabyte hard drive, and costs $1,300 more.

"It (this category) could potentially be bigger than the existing laptop

market," Enderle said. "If you believe in the cloud computing model of the future, this is the kind of product that leads up to that future."

Cloud computing refers to services centrally stored remotely on networks rather than on your device, which has to access the information "in the cloud" via the Web.

According to PC Magazine analyst Cisco Cheng, the Dell PC's ability to do so much with so few on-board resources comes with another caveat - like most PCs, it might crash.

"The combination of the Atom processor and 1 Gigabyte of memory gives you more than enough power to accomplish any general-purpose task, whether (you are) running MS Office 2007, encoding a video, running iTunes, watching YouTube, or playing online poker. Just don't do all of these things simultaneously," he said in an online review.

And makers of these computers must not forget the ever-present threat that impulse buyers might find that the iPhone or iPod Touch soothes their craving for a low-cost, web-enabled computer, even thought its screen is only 3-inches, and it lacks a full keyboard.

One in Five Bosses Screen Applicants' Web Lives

Written references could become old hat for hiring managers with one in five saying they use social networking sites to research job candidates - and a third of them dismissing the candidate after what they discover.

A survey by online job site CareerBuilder.com of 3,169 hiring managers found 22 percent of them screened potential staff via social networking profiles, up from 11 percent in 2006.

An additional nine percent said they don't currently use social networking sites like Facebook or MySpace to screen potential employees but they do plan to start.

The survey found that 34 percent of the managers who do screen candidates on the Internet found content that made them drop the candidate from any short list.

The top area for concern among the hiring managers with 41 percent citing this as a downfall were candidates posting information about drinking or using drugs.

The second area with 40 percent of concern were candidates posting provocative or inappropriate photographs or information.

Other areas of concern to arise from social network sites were poor communication skills, lying about qualifications, candidates using discriminatory remarks related to race, gender or religion, and an unprofessional screen name.

But the survey found hiring managers scouring social network pages was not all bad with 24 percent of these managers saying they found content to help them solidify their decision to hire that candidate.

Top factors that influenced their hiring decision included candidate's

backgrounds supporting their qualifications for the job, proving they had good communications skills, and having a site that conveyed a professional image with a wide range of interests.

"Hiring managers are using the Internet to get a more well-rounded view of job candidates in terms of their skills, accomplishments and overall fit within the company," said CareerBuilder.com spokeswoman Rosemary Haefner in a statement.

"As a result, more job seekers are taking action to make their social networking profiles employer-friendly. Sixteen percent of workers who have social networking pages said they modified the content on their profile to convey a more professional image to potential employers."

Obama Sex Video? Hardly. It’s Spyware Spreading Via E-mail

Don’t believe everything you read on the Internet: Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama isn’t a terrorist...or a porn star.

A malicious spam e-mail is spreading that claims to have a link to a sex video of Obama but is instead spyware that steals sensitive data from the computer, security firm Sophos warned on Wednesday.

The subject line says "Obama sex video!!!" and the e-mail appears to come from "infonews@obama.com, Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant at Sophos, says on his blog.

Clicking on the link downloads an executable file that plays an amateur porn video, but Obama is not in it.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes a Trojan horse known as Mal/Hupig-D is installed. The Trojan targets Windows machines and steals passwords and bank account data, Cluley said.

Is it the work of the Republicans? Probably not; it has the trademark bad grammar and excessive punctuation of traditional phishing attempts, many of which originate outside English-speaking countries.

Creator of Web Spots A Flaw in Internet Explorer

Tim Berners-Lee, the British-born inventor of the World Wide Web, says he doesn’t like to express preferences among Web browsers. But he does have an issue with one of them: Microsoft Corp.’s Internet Explorer.

Berners-Lee, director of the standard-setting World Wide Web Consortium, or W3C, said in an interview this week that Internet Explorer is falling behind other browsers in the way it handles an important graphics feature for Web pages.

A Web image that is encoded as a scalable vector graphic, or SVG, can be resized to fit the computer screen or zoomed into without becoming blocky and losing sharpness, as happens with images encoded as the more traditional "bitmaps." Maps are one popular use of SVG.

"If you look around at browsers, you'll find that most of them support scalable vector graphics," Berners-Lee said. "I'll let you figure out which one has been slow in supporting SVG."

That would be Internet Explorer. While Firefox, Safari and other browsers have built-in support for SVG, Microsoft relies on a plug-in from Adobe Systems Inc. that must be downloaded before Internet Explorer can show SVG objects. This applies even to the recently released "beta" version of Internet Explorer 8.

"SVG support is something that we have been evaluating for some time," Microsoft said in a statement. "We recognize the demand for vector graphics from Web developers, and realize this is a high-priority demand."

The matter is more urgent for Microsoft because on Jan. 1, Adobe will be ending its support of the SVG plug-in, and it's unclear if it will be available for download after that.

Microsoft supported another format for vector graphics, called Vector Markup Language, or VML. However, the World Wide Web Consortium recommended SVG in 2001.

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